THE CALIFORNIACS

BY

INEZ HAYNES IRWIN

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Goodbye & good wishes
& come back & be a
Californian as so many
of us have done.

From

May 7-27. Bertha D. Woolley

THE CALIFORNIACS

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From the Painting by WILLIAM KEITH

"Yes, California is quite as beautiful as her poets insist and her painters prove."

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BY

INEZ HAYNES IRWIN

AUTHOR OF
"PHOEBE AND ERNEST"

SAN FRANCISCO
A. M. ROBERTSON
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SAN FRANCISCO

TO M. C. AND A. J. G.

WHO SHOWED ME MUCH OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO I LOVE

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THE CALIFORNIACS.

ALIFORNIA, which produces the maximum of scenery and the minimum of weather; California, which grows the biggest men, trees, vegetables and fleas in the world, and the most beautiful women, babies, flowers and fruits; California, which, on the side, delivers a yearly crop of athletes, boxers, tennis players, swimmers, runners and a yearly crop of geniuses, painters, sculptors, architects, authors, musicians, actors, producers and photographers; California, where every business man writes novels, or plays, or poetry, or all three; California, which has spawned

the Coppa, Carmel and San Quentin schools of literature; California, where all the ex-pugs become statesmen and all the ex-cons become literateurs; California, the home of the movie, the Spanish mission, the golden poppy, the militant labor leader, the turkey-trot, the grizzly-bear, the bunny-hug, progressive politics and most American slang; California, which can at a moment's notice produce an earthquake, a volcano, a geyser; California, where the spring comes in the fall and the fall comes in the summer and the summer comes in the winter and the winter never comes at all; California, where everybody is born beautiful and nobody grows old—that California is populated mainly with Californiacs.

CALIFORNIA, I repeat, is populated mainly with Californiacs; but the Californiacs are by no means confined to California. They have, indeed, wandered far afield. New York, for instance, has a colony so large that the average New Yorker is well acquainted with the symptoms of *Californoia*. The Californiac is unable to talk about anything but California, except when he interrupts himself to knock every other place on the face of the earth. He looks with pity on anybody born outside of California and he believes that no one who has ever seen California willingly lives elsewhere. He himself often lives elsewhere, but he never admits that it is from choice. He refers to California always as "God's country", and if you permit him to

start his God's country line of talk, it is all up with intelligent conversation for the rest of the day. He will discourse on California scenery, climate, crops, athletes, women, art-sense, etc., *ad libitum*, *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseum*. He is a walking compendium of those Who's Whosers who were born in California. He can reel off statistics which flatter California, not by the yard, but by the mile. And although he is proud enough of the ease and abundance with which things grow in California, he is even more proud of the size to which they attain. Gibes do not stop the Californiac, nor jeers give him pause. He believes that he was appointed to talk about California. And Heaven knows, he does. He has plenty of sense of humor otherwise, but mention California and it is as

though he were conducting a revival meeting.

ONCE a party which included a Californiac were taking an evening stroll. Presently a huge full moon cut loose from the horizon and began a tour of the sky. Admiring comments were made. "I suppose you have them bigger in California," a young woman observed slyly to the Californiac. He did not smile; he only looked serious. Again, a Californiac mentioned to me that he had married an eastern woman. "Any eastern woman who marries a Californian," I observed in the spirit of badinage, "really takes a very great risk. Her husband must always be comparing her with the beautiful women of his native state." "Yes," he answered, "I've often said to my wife,

'Lucy, you're a very pretty woman, but you ought to see some of our San Francisco girls.'" "I hope," I replied, "that she boxed your ears." He did not smile; he only looked pained. Once only have I seen the Californiac silenced. A dinner party which included a globe-trotter, were listening to a victim of an advanced stage of Californoia. He had just disposed of the East, South and Middle West with a few caustic phrases and had started on his favorite subject. "You are certainly a wonderful people," the globe-trotter said, when he had finished. "Every large city in Europe has a colony of Californians, all rooting for California as hard as they can, and all living as far away as they can possibly get."

MYSELF, Californoia did not bother me for a long time after I first went to California. I am not only accustomed to an offensive insular patriotism on the part of my countrymen, but, in addition, all my life I have had to apologize to them for being a New Englander. The statement that I was brought up in Boston always produces a sad silence in my listeners, and a long look of pity. Soft-hearted strangers do their best to conceal their tears, but they rarely succeed. I have reached the point now, however, where I no longer apologize for being a Bostonian; I proffer no explanations. I make the damaging admission the instant I meet people and leave the matter of further recognition to them. If they choose to consider that Boston bringing-up a

social bar sinister, so be it. I have discovered recently that the fact that I happened to be born in Rio Janeiro offers some amelioration. But nothing can entirely remove the handicap. So, I reiterate, indurated as I am to pity, the contemptuous attitude of the average Californiac did not at first annoy me. But after a while even I, calloused New Englander that I am, began to resent it.

This, for instance, may happen to you at any time in California—it is the Californiac's way of paying the greatest tribute he knows:

"DO you know," somebody says, "I should never guess that you were an Eastener. You're quite like one of us—cordial and simple and natural."

"But—but," you say, trying to collect your wits against this left-handed compliment, "I don't think I differ from the average Easterner."

"Oh, yes, you do. You don't notice it yourself, of course. But I give you my word, nobody will ever suspect that you are an Easterner unless you tell it yourself. They *really* won't."

"But—but," you say, beginning to come back, "I have no objection whatever to being known as an Easterner."

That holds her for a moment. And while she is casting about for phrases with which to meet this extraordinary condition, you rally gallantly. "In fact, I am *proud* of being an Easterner."

That ends the conversation.

Or somebody in a group asks you what part of the East you 're from.

"New York," perhaps you reply.

"New York. My husband came from New York," she goes on. "He was brought up there. But he's lived in California for twenty years. He got the idea a few years ago that he wanted to go back East. I said to him, 'All right, we'll go back and visit for a while and see how you like it.' One month was enough for him. The people there are so cold and formal and conventional, and then, my dear, your *climate!*"

"Yes," another takes it up. "When I was in the East, a friend invited me out to his place in the country. He wanted me to see his pine grove. My dears, if you could have seen those little sticks of trees."

"I went to New York once," a third chimes in. "I never could get accustomed to carrying an ice umbrella—I

could n't close it when I got home. I'd come to stay for a month but I left in a week."

AND so it goes. No feeling on anybody's part of your sense of outrage. In fact, Californiacs always use the word *eastern* in your presence as a synonym for *cold, conventional, dull, stupid, humorless.*

Sometimes it actually casts a blight—this Californoia—on those who come to live in California. I remember saying once to a young man—just in passing and merely to make conversation: "Are you a native son?"

His face at once grew very serious. "No," he admitted reluctantly. "You see, it was my misfortune to be born in Iowa, but I came out here to college. After I'd graduated I made up my mind

to go into business here. And now I feel that all my interests are in California. Of course it isn't quite the same as being born here. But sometimes I feel as though I really were a native son. Everybody is so kind. They do everything in their power to make you forget—"

"Good heavens," I interrupted, "are you apologizing to me for being born in Iowa? I've never been in Iowa, but nothing could convince me that it isn't just as good a place as any other place, including California. The trouble with you is that you've let these Californiacs buffalo you. What you want to do is to throw out your chest and insist that God made Iowa first and the rest of the world out of the leavings."

IF you mention the eastern winter to a Californiac, he tells you with great particularity of the dreadful storms he encountered there. Nothing whatever about the beauty of the snow. To a Californiac, snow and ice are more to be dreaded than hell-fire and brimstone. If you mention the eastern summer, he refers in scathing terms to the puny trees we produce, the inadequate fruits and vegetables. Nothing at all about their delicious flavor. To a Californiac, beauty is measured only by size. Nothing that England or France has to offer makes any impression on the Californiac because it's different from California. As for the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome, he simply never sees it. The Netherlands are dismissed with one adjective—*flat*. For

a country to be flat is, in the opinion of the Californiac, to relinquish its final claim to beauty. A Californiac once made the statement to me that Californians considered themselves a little better than the rest of the country. I considered that the prize Californiacism until I heard the following from a woman-Californiac in Europe: "*I saw nothing in all Italy,*" she said, "*to compare with the Italian quarter of San Francisco.*"

NOW I am by no means a rabid New Englander. I love the New England scene and I have the feeling for it that we all have for the place in which we played as children. Most New Englanders have a kind of temperamental shyness. They are still like the English from whom they are de-

scended. It is difficult for them to talk about the things on which they feel most deeply. The typical New Englander would discuss his native place with no more ease than he would discuss his father and mother. In California I often had the impulse to break through that inhibiting silence—to talk about Massachusetts; the lovely, tender, tamed, domesticated country; its rolling, softly-contoured, maternal-looking hills; its forests like great green cathedral chapels; its broad, placid rivers, its little turbulent ones; its springs and runnels and waterfalls and rivulets all silver-shining and silver-sounding; the myriads of lakes and countless ponds that make the world look as though the blue sky had broken and fallen in pieces over the landscape; the spring when first the arbutus comes up pink and

delicate through the snow and later the fields begin to glimmer with the white of white violets, to flash with the purple of purple ones, and the children hang May baskets at your door; the summer when the fields are buried knee-deep under a white drift of daisies or sealed by the gold planes of buttercups, and the old lichened stone walls are smothered in blackberry vines; the autumn with the goldenrod and blue asters; the woods like conflagrations burning gold and orange, flaming crimson and scarlet; and especially that fifth season, the Indian summer, when the vistas are tunnels of blue haze and the air tastes of honey and wine; then winter and the first snow (does anybody, brought up in snow country, ever outgrow the thrill of the first fluttering flakes?) the marvel of the fairy frost-

world into which the whole country turns.

Do you suppose I ever talked about Massachusetts? Not once. And so I have one criticism to bring against the Californiac. He is a person to whom you cannot talk about home. He grows restive the instant you get off the subject of California. Praise of any other place to his mind implies a criticism of California.

ON the other hand, that frenzied patriotism has its wonderful and its beautiful side. It is a result partly of the startling beauty and fecundity of California and partly of a geographical remoteness and sequestration which turned the Californians in on themselves for everything. To it is due much of the extraordinary development

of California. For to the average Californian, the best is not only none too good for California, but she can have nothing else. Californians—even those not suffering from an offensive case of Californoia—speak of their State in reverential terms. To hear Maud Younger—known everywhere as the "millionaire waitress" and the most devoted labor-fan in the country—pronounce the word California, should be a lesson to any actor in emotional sound values. The thing that struck me most on my first visit to California was that boosting instinct. In store windows everywhere, I saw signs begging the passer-by to root for this development project or that. Several years ago, passing down Market street, I ran into a huge crowd gathered at the Lotta Fountain. I stopped to investigate.

Moving steadily from a top to a lower window of one of the newspaper offices, as though unwound from a reel, ran a long strip of paper covered with a list of figures. To this list, new figures were constantly added. They were the sums of money being subscribed at that very moment for the Exposition. Applause and cheers greeted each additional sum. That was the financial germ from which grew the wonderful Arabian Nights city by the bay. It was typically Californian—that scene—and typically Californian the spirit back of it. And four years later, when the outbreak of the war brought temporary panic, there was no diminution in that spirit. Whether it was a "Buying-Day," a "Beach Day," an "Automomobile Parade," a "Prosperity Dinner," San Francisco was always ready to insist

that everything was going well. It was the same spirit which inspired a whole city, the day the Exposition opened, to rise early to *walk* to the grounds, and to stand, an avalanche of humanity, waiting for the gates to part. It was the same spirit which inspired the whole city, the night the Exposition ended, to stay for the closing ceremonies until midnight, and then, without even picking a flower from the abundance they were abandoning, silently and sorrowfully to walk home.

LET'S look into the claims of these Californiacs.

I can unfortunately say little about the State of California. For with the exception of a few short trips away from San Francisco, and one meager few

days' trip into the South, I have never explored it. Nobody warned me of the danger of such a proceeding, and so I innocently went straight to San Francisco the first time I visited the coast. Stranger, let me warn *you* now. If ever you start for California with the intention of seeing anything of the State, do that before you enter San Francisco. If you must land in San Francisco first, jump into a taxi, pull down the curtains, drive through the city, breaking every speed law, to "Third and Townsend," sit in the station until a train,—some train, *any* train—pulls out, and go with it. If in crossing Market street, you raise that taxi-curtain as much as an inch, believe me, stranger, it's all off; you're lost. You'll never leave San Francisco. Myself, both times I have gone to

California, I have vowed to see Yosemite, the big trees, the string of beautiful old missions which dot the state, some of the quaint, languid, semi-tropical towns of the south, some of the brisk, brilliant, bustling towns of the north. But I have never really done it because I saw San Francisco first.

I treasure my few impressions of the state, however. Towns and cities, comparatively new, might be three centuries old, so beautifully have they sunk into the colorful, deeply configurated background that the country provides. Even a city as thriving and wide-awake as Stockton has about its plaza an air so venerable that it is a little like the ancient hill-cities of Italy; more like, I have no doubt, the ancient plain-cities of Spain. And San Juan Bautista—with its history-haunted old Inn, its

ghost-haunted old Mission and its rose-filled old Mission garden where everything, even the sun-dial, seems to sleep —is as old as Babylon or Tyre.

You will be constantly reminded of Italy, although California is not quite so vividly colored, and perhaps of Japan, for you are always coming on places that are startlingly like scenes in Japanese prints. Certain aspects from the bay of the town of Sausalito, with strangely shaped and softly tinted houses tumbling down the hillside, certain aspects of the bay from the heights of Berkeley, with the expanses of hills and water and the inevitable fog smudging a smoky streak here and there, are more like the picture-country of the Japanese masters than any American reality.

IF I were to pick the time when I should travel in California, it would be in the early summer. All the rest of the world at that moment is green. California alone is sheer gold. One composite picture remains in my memory—the residuum of that single trip into the south. On one side the Pacific—tigerish, calm, powerfully palpitant, stretching into eternity in enormous bronze-gold, foam-laced planes. On the other side, great, bare, voluptuously-contoured hills, running parallel with the train and winding serpentinely on for hours and hours of express speed; hills that look, not as though they were covered with yellow grass, but as though they were carved from massy gold. At intervals come ravines filled with a heavy green growth. Oc-

casionally on those golden hill-surfaces appear trees.

Oh, the trees of California!

If they be live-oaks—and on the hills they are most likely to be live-oaks—they are semi-globular in shape like our apple trees, only huge, of a clamant, virile, poisonous green. They grow alone, and each one of them seems to be standing knee-deep in shadow so thick and moist that it is like a deep pool of purple paint.

Occasionally, on the flat stretches, eucalyptus hedges film the distance. And the eucalyptus—tall, straight, of a uniform slender size, the baby leaves of one shape and color, misted with a strange bluish fog-powder, the mature leaves of another shape and color, deep-green on one side, purple on the other, curved and carved like a scimitar of

Damascus steel, the blossoms hanging in great soft bunches, white or shell-pink, delicate as frost-stars—the eucalyptus is the most beautiful tree in the world. Standing in groups, they seem to color the atmosphere. Under them the air is like a green bubble. Standing alone, the long trailing scarfs of bark blowing away from their bodies—they are like ragged, tragic gypsy queens.

THEN there is the madrone. The wonder of the madrone is its bole. Of a tawny red-gold—glossy—it contributes an arresting coppery note to green forest vistas. Somebody has said that in the distance they look like naked Indians slipping through the woods.

Last, there is the redwood tree! And the redwood is more beautiful even than the stone-pine of Italy. Gray-

lavender in color, hard as though cut from stone, swelling at the base to an incredible bulk, shooting straight to an incredible height and tapering exquisitely as it soars, it drops not foliage but plumage. To walk in a redwood forest at night and to look up at the stars tangled in the tree-tops, to watch the moonlight sift through the masses of soft black-green feathers, down, down, until strained to a diaphanous tenuity it lies a faint silver gossamer at your feet, is to feel that you are living in one of the old woodcuts which illustrate Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream."

Most people in first visiting California are obsessed with the flowers, the abundant callas, the monstrous roses, the giant geraniums. But I never ceased to wonder at the beauty of the trees.

And remember, I have not as yet seen what they call the "big" trees.

Yes, California is quite as beautiful as her poets insist and her painters prove. It turns everybody who goes there into a poet, at least temporarily. Babes lisp in numbers and those of the native population who don't actually write poetry, talk it—no matter what the subject is. Take the case of Sam Berger. Sam Berger—I will explain for the benefit of my women readers—was first a distinguished amateur heavyweight boxer who later became sparring partner for Bob Fitzimmons and manager to Jim Jeffries. In an interview on the subject of boxing, Mr. Berger said, "Boxing is an art—just as much so as music. To excel in it, you must have a conception of time, of balance, of distance. The man who

attempts to box without such a conception is like a person who tries to be a musician without having an ear for music."

Is it not evident from this that Mr. Berger would have become a poet if a more valiant art had not claimed him?

In that ideal future state in which all the world-parts are assembled and perfectly coördinated into one vast self-governing machine, I hope that California will be turned into a great international reservation, given over entirely to poets, lovers and honeymoon couples. It is too beautiful to waste on mere bromidic residential or business interests.

SO much for the State of California. I confess with shame that that is all I know about it, although I reiterate that that ignorance is not my fault. So now for San Francisco.

San Francisco!

San Francisco!

Many people do not realize that San Francisco tips a peninsula projecting west and north from the coast of California. Between that peninsula and the mainland lies a blue arm of the blue San Francisco bay. So that when you have bisected the continent and come to what appears to be the edge of the western world, you must take a ferry to get to the city itself.

I hope you will cross that bay first at night, for there is no more romantic hour in which to enter San Francisco;

the bay spreading out back of you a-plash with all kinds of illuminated water craft and the city lifting up before you ablaze with thousands of pin point lights; for San Francisco's site is a hilly one and the city lies like a jewelled mantle thrown carelessly over many peaks. You land at the Ferry building—surely the most *welcoming* station in the world—walk through it, come out at the other side on a circular place which is one end of Market street, the main artery of the city. If this is by day, you can see that the other end of Market street is Twin Peaks—a pair of hills that imprint bare, exquisitely shaped contours of gold on a blue sky —with the effect somehow of a stage-drop. If you come by night, you will find Market street crowded with people, lighted with a display of electric signs

second only in size, number, brilliancy and ingenuity to those on Broadway. But whether you come by day or by night, the instant you emerge from the Ferry building, San Francisco gets you. Market street is one of the most entertaining main-traveled urban roads in the world. Newspaper offices in a cluster, store windows flooded with light, filled with advertising devices of the most amusing originality, cars, taxis, crowds, it has all the earmarks of the main street of any big American city, with the addition, at intervals, of the pretty "islands" so typical of the boulevards of Paris and with, last of all, a zip and a zest, a pep and a punch, a go and a ginger that is distinctively Californian. I repeat that California throws her first tentacle into your heart as you stand there wondering whether you'll go to

your hotel or, plunging headforemost into the crowds, swim with the current.

IMAGINE a city built not on seven but a hundred hills. I am sure there are no less than a hundred and probably there are more. Certainly I climbed a hundred. On three sides the sea laps the very hem of this city and on one side the forest reaches down to its very toes. That is, when all is said, the most marvelous thing about San Francisco—that the sea and forest come straight to its borders. And as, because of its peninsula situation they form the only roads out, sea and forest are integral parts of the city life. It accounts for the fact that you see no city pallor in the faces on the streets and perhaps for the fact that you see so little unhappi-

ness on them. On Sundays and holidays, crowds pour across the bay all day long and then, loaded with flowers and greens, pour back all the evening long. As for flowers and greens, the hotels, shops, cafés, the little hole-in-the-wall restaurants are full of them. They are so cheap on the streets that everybody wears them. Everybody seems to play as much as possible out of doors. Everybody seems to sleep out of doors. Everybody has just come from a hike or is just going off on one. Imagine a climate rainless three-quarters of the year, which permits the workingman to tramp all through his vacation with the impedimenta only of a blanket, moneyless if he will, but with the certainty always that the orchards and gardens will provide him with food.

THROUGH the city runs one central hill-spine. From this crest, by day, you look on one side across the bay with its three beautiful islands, bare Yerba Buena, jeweled Alcatraz and softly-fluted Angel Island, all seemingly adrift in the blue waters, to Marin county. The waters of the bay are as smooth as satin, as blue as the sky, and they are slashed in every direction with the silver wakes left by numberless ferryboats. Those ferryboats, by the way, are extremely graceful; they look like white peacocks dragging enormous white-feather tails. By night the bay view from the central hill-spine shows the cities of Berkeley and Oakland like enormous planes of crystal tilted against the distance, the ferryboats illuminated but still peacock-shaped, floating on the

black waters like monster toys of Venetian glass. In the background, rising from low hills, peaks the blue triangle of Mt. Diablo. In the foreground reposes Tamalpais—a mountain shaped in the figure of a woman—lying prone. The wooded slopes of Tamalpais form the nearest big playground for San Franciscans—and Tamalpais is to the San Franciscan what Fujiyama is to the Japanese. Would that I had space to tell here of the time when their mountain caught fire and thousands—men, women and children—turned out to save it! Everybody helped who could. Even the bakers of San Francisco worked all night and without pay to make bread for the fire-fighters.

By day, on the city side of the crest, you catch glimpses of other hills, covered for the most part with buildings,

like lustrous pearl cubes; for San Francisco is a pearl-gray city. At night you can look straight down the side streets to Market street on a series of illuminated restaurant signs which project over the sidewalk at right angles to the buildings. It is as though a colossal golden stairway tempted your foot.

PERHAPS after all the most breath-taking quality about San Francisco is these unexpected glimpses that you are always getting of beautiful hill-heights and beautiful valley-depths. Sunset skies like aerial banners flare gold and crimson on the tops of those hills. City lights, like nests of diamonds, glitter and glisten in the depths of those valleys. Then the fogs! I have stood at my window at night and watched the ragged armies of the air

drift in from the bay and take possession of the whole city. Such fogs. Not distilled from pea soup like the London fogs; moist air-gauzes rather, pearl-touched and glimmering; so thick sometimes that it is as though the world had veiled herself in mourning, so thin often that the stars shine through with a delicate muffled lustre. By day, even in the full golden sunshine of California, the view from the hills shows a scene touched here and there with fog.

As for the hills themselves, steep as they are, street cars go up and down them. What is more extraordinary, so do automobiles. The hill streets are cobbled commonly; but often, for the better convenience of vehicles, there is a central path of asphalt, smoothly finished. I have seen those asphalt planes by day when a flood, first of rain and

then of sun, turned them to rivers of molten silver; I have seen them by night when an automobile, standing at the hilltop and pouring its light over them, turned them to rivers of molten gold.

WITHIN walking distance of the ferry is the heart of the city. Here are the newspaper buildings, many big and little hotels, numberless restaurants, the theatres and the shopping district. The region about Union Square, Geary street, Grant Avenue, Post and Sutter streets, is a busy and attractive area. You could live in San Francisco for a month and ask no greater entertainment than walking through it. Beyond are various foreign quarters and districts inevitably growing colder and more residential in aspect

as they get farther away from the city heart. Beyond the heights where one catches glimpses of the ocean, the city slopes to abrupt cliffs along the outer harbor, and here are mansions whose windy gardens overhang the surf. Beyond Market street is the area described in the phrase, "south of the slot". Superficially drab and gray in aspect, it has been celebrated again and again in song and story. From this region have come the majority of San Francisco's champion athletes. Near here beats the red heart of the labor world. And not far off still stands that exquisite gem of Spanish catholicism—Mission Dolores.

HERE and there—and it is a little like meeting a ghost in a crowded street—through all the beauty and freshness of the new city project the bones of the old: the lofty ruins, ivy-hung, of a huge Nob Hill Palace here; the mere foundation, bush-encircled, of a big old family mansion there; elaborate rusty fences of Mid-Victorian iron which enclose nothing; wide low steps of Mid-Victorian marble which lead nowhere. The San Franciscan speaks always with a tender, regretful affection of that dead city, but, as is natural, he speaks of it less and less. For myself, I am glad now that I never saw the city that was; for I can love the city that is with no *arriere pensee*.

They serve, however—those bones

of a dead past — to remind the stranger of a marvelous rebuilding feat, to accent the virility and vitality, the courage and enterprise of a people who, before a half decade had passed, had eliminated almost every trace of the greatest disaster of modern time.

PERHAPS, after the beauty of its situation, the stranger is most struck with the picturesqueness given to the city by its cosmopolitan atmosphere. For San Francisco, serving as one of the two main great gateways to an enormous country, a front entrance to America from the Orient, a back entrance from Europe and a side entrance from South America, standing halfway between tropics and polar regions, a great port of the greatest ocean in the world, becomes naturally one of the

world's main caravanseries, a meeting place of nations.

Chinatown is not far off from the heart of the city. And Chinatown pervades San Francisco. It is as though it distilled some faint oriental perfume with which constantly it suffuses the air. You meet the Chinese everywhere. The men differ in no wise from the men with whom the smaller Chinatowns of the East have acquainted us. The women make the streets exotic. Little, slim-limbed creatures, amber-skinned, jewel-eyed, dressed in silk of black or pastel colors, loosely coated and comfortably trousered, their jet-black shining hair filled with ornaments, they go about in groups which include old women and young matrons, half-grown girls slender as forsythia branches, babies arrayed like princes. You are likely to

meet groups of Hindus, picturesquely turbaned, coffee-brown in color, slight-figured, straight-featured, black-bearded. You see Japanese and Filipinos. And as for Latins—French, Italians and Spanish flood the city. There are eight thousand Montenegrins alone in California. I never suspected there were eight thousand in Montenegro. And our own continent contributes Canadians, Mexicans, citizens from every State in the Union. In addition, you run everywhere into soldiers and sailors. The bits of talk you overhear in the street are so exciting that you become a professional eavesdropper, strong-languaged, picturesquely slangy, pungent narrative. Sometimes the speaker has come up from Arizona, or New Mexico or Texas, sometimes down from Alaska, Washington or

Oregon, sometimes across from Nevada or Montana or Wyoming. And with many of them—at least with those that live west of the rocky mountains—San Francisco is always (and I never failed to respond to the thrill of it) "the city". Not *a* city or *any* city, but *the* city—as though there were no other city on the face of the earth.

ALL this alien picturesqueness adds enormously of course to the San Franciscan's native picturesqueness. Not that the Californian needs adventitious aid in this matter. Indeed this cosmopolitanism of atmosphere serves best as a background, these alien types as a foil, for the native-born. For the Californians are a comely people. No traveler has failed—at least no man has

failed—to pay tribute in passing to the Californian women. And they *are* beautiful. In that climate which produces bigness in everything, they grow to heroic size. And as a result of a life, inevitably open-air in an atmosphere always fog-touched, they have eyes of a notable limpidity and complexions of a striking vividness. To walk through that limited area which is the city's heart—especially when the theatres are letting out—is to come on beauty not in one pretty girl at a time, nor in pairs and trios, nor by scores and dozens; it is to see it in battalias and acres, and all of them meeting your eyes with the frank open gaze of the West. San Francisco is, I fancy, the only city on the globe where any musical comedy audience is always more beautiful than any musical com-

edy chorus. They are not only beautiful—they are magnificent.

Watch in the Admission Day parade for the Native Daughters of the Golden West—stalwart, stunning young giantesses marching with a splendid carriage and a superb poise—they seem like a new race of women.

AND the climate being of such kind that, for three-quarters of the year you can count on unvarying sunny weather, the women dress on the streets with nothing short of gorgeousness. All the colors that the rainbow knows and a few that it has never seen, appear here. And worn with such *chic*, such *verve!* Not even in Paris, where may appear a more conventional smartness, is sartorial picturesqueness carried off with such an air of authority. Polaire,

who was advertised as the ugliest woman in the world, should have made a fortune in California. For the Californian does not really know what female ugliness is. I have a theory that the California men cannot quite appreciate the beauty of their women. They take beauty for granted; they have never seen anything else. Nevertheless, that beauty and that dash constitute a menace. A city ordinance compels traffic policemen to wear smoked glasses, and car conductors and chauffeurs, blinders.

Go West, young man!

BUT everybody celebrates the beauty of the Californian woman. Probably that is because heretofore "everybody" has been masculine. He has been so busy looking at the California woman that he hasn't realized yet that there's a male of the species. The California man, I sing.

It is curious what a difference of opinion there is in regard to him. I have heard Californiacs say in their one moment of humility, "Why is it, when we turn out such magnificent women, that our men are so undersized?" Now I know nothing about average male heights and weights. I have never seen any comparative statistics. I can say only that the average Californian seems bigger than the average man. And often in walking through the San

Francisco streets the eye, ranging along the crowd of pedestrians of average California stature, will strike on a man who bulks a whale, a leviathan, a dreadnaught, beside the others, and rises a column, a monolith, a tower above them.

He is certainly upstanding, this average California male—running to bulk and a little to flesh. Often the line of feature is so regular that it suggests the Greek. He has eyes like mountain lakes and a smile like a break of sun. He generally flashes a dimple or two or three or more (Californians are speckled with dimples). He manufactures his own slang. And he joshes and jollies all day long. In fact, he's—

Oh, well, go West, young woman!

BEYOND its high average of male beauty California has, in its laborman, produced a new physical type. It is different from the standardized American type, of which Abraham Lincoln of a past and the Wright brothers of a present generation are perfect specimens—the ugly-beautiful face, long and lean, with its harshly contoured strength of feature and its subtly softening melancholy of expression. The look of labor in California is not so much of strength as of force, an indomitable, unconquerable force. Melancholy is not there, but spirit; that fire and light which means hope. It is as though they were molded of iron —those faces—but illuminated from within. And with that strength goes the California comeliness.

Pulchritude begins in childhood with the Californian, grows and strengthens through youth to middle age. Even the old—but there are no old people in California. Nobody ever gets a chance to grow old there. The climate won't let you. The scenery won't let you. The life won't let you.

All this picturesqueness, beauty and charm form the raw materials of the most entertaining city life in the country. For whatever San Francisco is or is not, it is *never* dull. Life there is in a perpetual ferment. It is as though the city kettle had been set on the stove to boil half a century ago and had never been taken off. The steam is pouring out of the nose. The cover is dancing up and down. The very kettle is rocking and jumping. But by some miracle the destructive explosion never happens.

The Californian is easy-going in a sense and yet he works hard and plays hard. Athletics are feverish there, suffrage rampant, politics frenzied, labor militant. Would that I had space here to dilate on the athletic game as it is played in California—played with the charm and spirit and humor with which Californians play every game. Would that I had space to narrate, as Maud Younger tells it—the moving story of how the women won the vote in California. Would that I had space to describe the whirlwind political campaigns when there are at least four candidates in the field for every office, and when you are besought by postal, by letter, by dodgers, by advertisements in the papers and on the billboards to vote for all of them. Would that I had space—but here I must take the space —to tell how the Californian plays.

REMEMBER always that California has virtually no weather to contend with. For three months of the year rain appears; for the remaining nine months it is eliminated entirely. And so, with a country of rare picturesqueness for a background, a people of rare beauty for actors, everybody more or less permeated with the artistic instinct and everybody more or less writing poetry—California has a pageant for breakfast, a fiesta for luncheon and a carnival for dinner. They are always electing queens. In fact any girl in California, who hasn't been a queen of something before she's twenty-one, is a poor prune.

In the country, especially in the wine districts where the merrymaking sometimes lasts for days, these festivals are

beautiful. In the city it depends largely, of course, on how much the commercial spirit enters into it; but whether they are beautiful or the reverse, they are always entertaining. Single streets, for instance, in San Francisco, are always having carnivals. The street elects a king and queen, plasters itself with bunting, arches itself with electric lights, lines its curbs with temporary booths, fills its corners with shows, sells confetti until the pedestrian swims in it —and then whoops it up for a week. All around, north, south, east, west, every other street is jet-black, sleeping decorously, ignoring utterly that blare of color, that blaze of light, that boom of noise around the corner. They should worry—they're going to have a carnival themselves next week. Apropos, a San Francisco paper opened its

story of one of these affairs with the following sentence: "Last night (shall we call him Hans Schmidt?) was crowned with great pomp and ceremony king of the ——Street Carnival, and fifteen minutes later, with no pomp and ceremony whatever, he was arrested for petty larceny." Billy Jordan was made King of the Fillmore Street Carnival. Now Billy Jordan, who was over eighty years of age, had served as announcer for every big boxing contest in San Francisco since—well, let's say, since San Francisco was born. He always ends his ring announcement with the words, "Let her go!" The reporters say that in the crown and sceptre, the velvet and ermine of a king, he opened the Fillmore Street Carnival with "Let her go!". And for myself, I choose to believe that

story. The queen of this carnival—her first name was Manila, by the way—a pretty girl of course, was a picturesque detail in the city life for a week. In velvet, ermine and brilliant crown, she was always flashing from place to place in an automobile, surrounded by a group, equally pretty, of ladies in waiting. When the deep, cylindrical cistern-like reservoir on Twin Peaks was finished, they opened it with a dance; when the Stockton street tunnel was finished, they opened it with a dance; when the morgue was completed they opened *that* with a reception.

THE San Francisco papers reflect all this activity, and they certainly make entertaining reading. For one thing, the annual crop of pretty girls being ten times as large there as anywhere else, and photography being universally a fine art, the papers are filled with pictures of beautiful women. They are the only papers I have ever seen in which the faces that appear on the theatrical page pale beside those that accompany the news stories. The last three months of my stay in San Francisco I cut out all the pictures of pretty girls from three newspapers. They included all kinds of women—society, club, athletic, college, high-brow, low-brow; highway-women, burglaresses, forgeresses and murderesses. I have just counted those pictures—

three hundred and fifty-four—and all beautiful. When I received my paper in the morning—until the war made that function, even in California, a melancholy one—I used to look first at the pictures of the women. Then always I turned to the sporting page to see what record had been broken since yesterday and, if it were Saturday morning (I confess it without shame), to read the joyous account of Friday night's boxing contest. And, always before I settled to the important news of the day, I read the last "stunt".

Picturesque "stunts" are always being pulled off in San Francisco. Was it the late lamented Beachey flying with a pretty girl around the half-completed Tower of Jewels, was it a pretty actress selling roses at the Lotta Fountain for the benefit of the Belgians, it was some-

thing amusing, stirring and characteristic. Always the "stunt" involved a lot of pretty girls and often it demanded the services of the mayor. I shall regret to the end of my days that I did not keep a scrapbook devoted to Mayor Rolph's activities. For being mayor of San Francisco is no sinecure. But as most of his public duties seemed to involve floods of pretty girls—well, if I were a man it would be my ambition to be mayor of San Francisco for the rest of my life.

The year I spent in California they were building the Exposition. They made of that task, as they make of every task, a game and a play and a lark—a joy and a delight—even though they were building under the most discouraging conditions that an exposition ever encountered. But nothing daunts the

Californian, and so wood and iron, mortar and paint, grew steadily into the dream city that later fronted the bay.

AS I think it over, I am very glad that I did not tell the Californiacs how beautiful Massachusetts is. Because it would only have bewildered them. I am glad that I did not mention to them that I shall always cherish a kind of feeling for Massachusetts that I can develop for no other spot. Because it would only have hurt them. You must not tell a Californiac that you love any place but California or that you have found beauty elsewhere. It's like breaking an engagement of marriage with a girl. It's like telling a child that there's no such person as Santa Claus. There's no tactful way of wording it. It simply can't be done. And I am very glad

that I told the Californiacs all the time how much I love California, how much I love San Francisco. For beauty, California is like the fresh, glowing, golden crescent moon; it is waxing steadily to a noble fullness of development; and San Francisco is like the glittering evening-star; it fills the Pacific night with the happy radiance of its light and life. I think of California always—with its unabated fighting strength—as a champion among States. It takes the stranger—that champion State—under its mighty protection and gives him of its strength and happiness. It is more fun to be sick in California than to be well anywhere else. And I think of San Francisco always—the spirit of Tamalpais in the air—as an Amazon among cities. Its people love "the city" because, within the memory of

man it was built, and within the memory of child, rebuilt. They themselves helped to build and rebuild it. They have worked and fought for it through every inch and instant of its history. It takes the stranger—that Amazon city—into its great, warm, beating mother-heart. If you are sick it makes you well. If you are sad it makes you glad. It infuses you with its working spirit. It inspires you with its fighting spirit. It asks you to work and fight with it. Massachusetts never permitted me to work or fight for it. Woman is as yet, in no real sense, a citizen there. And the result is that I love California as I love no other State, and San Francisco as I love no other city. I have no real criticism to bring against the Californiac. In fact, reader—ah, I see you've guessed it. *I'm a Californiac myself.*

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Irwin, (Mrs.) Inez (Haynes)
The Californiacs

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